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ABSTRACT

During the 1960's, the nations of the world strove to provide access to schools, especially primary schools, to all children, on the assumption that education was a necessary and sufficient precondition for economic development. This faith gave way, in the 1970's and 1980's, to worldwide skepticism about the linkage between education and economic development, and a consequent retreat from the ideal of equality in educational policy. Accordingly, this paper reviews relationships and tensions among the three paramount goals of educational policy, since 1960, in socialist and capitalist countries alike: equality, integration, and decentralization. The original rationale of each of these goals is discussed, along with the detrimental consequences of the policies implemented to bring them about. The ideal of equality, associated with modernization and homogenization of culture, led paradoxically to increased inequality and disunity, owing to unfulfilled expectations of marginal cultures whose education prepared them to abandon their traditional economies and to become modern in a society that needed the skills of fewer people, and in economies growing far more slowly than in the 1960's when the optimistic plans were made. Thus equality of educational access has been abandoned in many countries as an unrealistic goal. New definitions of equality in education, less associated with cultural homogeneity and centrally imposed curricula, must be designed. (TE)

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The Retreat of Equality:
A Commentary on International Educational Policies Since 1960

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The Retreat of Equality: A Commentary on International Educational Policies Since 1960

Hans Weiler said in 1978 that "the age of skepticism had replaced the age of innocence in world education policies" (1978). The age of innocence he referred to as the decade of the 1960's, often called the decade of development, during which the nations of the world strove heroically to provide access to schools, especially primary schools to all children. The faith of that age was that education was the necessary pre-condition for economic development; even more, it was a sufficient condition for economic development. In the mid-1970's a world-wide skepticism in the linkage between education and economic development was apparent. For a host of reasons, by the decade of the 1980's, many nations had retreated from the attempt to educate everyone. Equality had been a principal goal of educational policy in most nations in the 1960's. But by the 1980's, the realization that the promise of equality was to be rhetorical had been accepted in many countries.

In this paper, I would like to review the relationships among three goals of educational policy which were held as paramount in most nations, whether socialist or capitalist, and the reasons for the decline of equality, which had been considered as the most important of the policy goals.

Three goals can be identified in the literature on national educational policies since 1960. The three are equality, integration, and decentralization. The three are interrelated. Indeed, equality can be realized partially by means of integration and decentralization. All are related to economic development, which in fact was the ultimate rationale for their existence as national policies. I intend also in this paper to examine the tensions among the three main goals of educational policies, as well as the tensions among policies related to each of those goals.

The three goals of national educational policies, equality, integration, and decentralization have all been supportive of and stimulated by economic development, and were seen in the early 1960's as necessary for economic development. In fact it is not difficult to argue that few nations would have entertained for long the costs attendant upon a dedication to these three goals had there not been a world-wide acceptance of the Schultz paradigm of human capital formation. Coincident with the acceptance of the human capital paradigm of the 1960's was an optimism of newly independent countries promising to provide schooling for the masses, to bring literacy and numeracy to their entire populations which had heard the promises of participation in modern economies. Developing countries which had been independent for a long time, including the Latin American countries, were hopeful of an alliance with the developed world to transform their themselves from commodity - exporting economies into producing economies. Coincidentally, the developed countries of the northern hemisphere determined to reform their elite systems into mass educational systems and thereby widen the base of participation in the future of their industrial economies.

Equality was proclaimed as the premier policy goal in the 1960's. Equality can be defined minimally (in a capitalist framework) as an equal right to education, or equal educational opportunity, or in a socialist or liberal framework as universal education which integrates school and work, valuing political cooperation and cooperation (Ferge, p. 16). The first interpretation often correlates schooling with occupations and income, while the second seeks to de-link schooling and occupation and income. The first approach was a policy tool of those who believed in the human capital model of economic development.

The countries whose policy framework recognizes correlations between schooling and other social goods have begun a massive effort to reduce the correlation by

attenuating the curve of schooling. The attempts appear not to have been successful. The strategies for reducing inequalities of access to educational system for females (Ferge, p. 21), socio-economic groups (Ferge, p. 20), ethnic groups (Ferge, p. 22), and rural and ethnic regional areas (Ferge, pp. 23-27) employed school building and consolidation in rural areas (Hallak, 1977) equalization of school funding within countries (Noah and Sherman, 1979), transfer of funds for education from developed to developing countries (Haag, 1982), reforms of curriculum and testing procedures (Ferge), expansion of secondary academic and vocational education (OECD, Greece, 1980), and the organization of comprehensive secondary schools (OECD, Sweden, 1981).

The later evaluations of the concept of equality have raised criticisms of certain uses of the term. In less developed countries there has been extensive criticism of the concept of equal educational opportunity as a concept imported from developed nations, with little relevance to its setting in Less Developed Countries (LDC's). Among this family of criticisms is the charge that LDC's do not possess the industrial maturity or capital base to accommodate complete equality of educational opportunity; further that many developed countries in Europe did not achieve that kind of equality until the mid-twentieth century, long after their industrial economics had matured. Hence, this argument goes, the LDC's are not ready to support equality of educational opportunity until massive capital transfers are made from developed countries to LDC's. Meanwhile, in LDC's inequalities will grow as they attempt to obtain the capital base necessary to build primary schools and train teachers to accommodate all those eligible (Ferge, pp. 14-17).

Meanwhile, some reformers point out, literacy programs for adults, industrial training programs, and other special private and public sector programs will be needed to assist nations to provide the required manpower for development.

The notion of equality of educational opportunity has been attacked from the point of view that mass schooling cannot precede economic development. That position argues from history that economic development has had to come before mass schooling and that the human capital claims to the contrary use data only from the post World War II period. Already developed nations which were reconstructing rather than accumulating their capital base. Those arguments of the revisionists of human capital theory and Marxists rest upon deep and extensive historical analyses.

It is necessary now to be much more careful when using historical analysis to define one's sample of countries. The sampling process in historical inquiry, like that in analyzing test scores or opinion polls includes and lead to flaws in analysis. The economic historian may make surprisingly different claims depending upon their countries sampled. There are no accepted rules for sampling countries in economic analysis; one chooses the sample which fits the case, and which provides data necessary for analysis - certainly the use of data from developed and developing countries can lead to different conclusions about the reciprocal cause and effect of education and economic development.

The importance of equal educational opportunity has since 1960 risen or fallen depending upon its perceived linkage to economic development. The human capital theory of development swept the non-socialist world in the 1960's. In that "decade of development" an article of faith was that nations with educated people can develop their economies. Mass education was seen as a necessary, perhaps even a sufficient condition for development. Nowhere was this faith more strongly expressed than in the Lyndon Johnson administration in the United States. The true believers of that paradigm exported it to the developing world, which itself needed little convincing. The promise of mass education was to be a first fruit of independence from the

colonial powers. In Latin America it was to be an expression of democracy as nations such as Venezuela emerged from dictatorships or reached for economic independence.

The age of skepticism about this linkage dawned in the 1970's as the job market failed to absorb the graduates of secondary schools in Africa, or failed to materialize for university graduates in Latin America. In the 1960's newly established governments or rapidly expanding governments themselves absorbed many graduates. This sector matured in the 1970's. The private sector expanded in the 1960's and 1970's until the energy shortage, world-wide inflation, and high interest rates came close to wrecking the economies of many LDC's. In some countries, the capitalist order came to an end due in part to these crises, as well as others, such as terrible drought and the inability of governments to cope with natural or man-made disasters.

The retreat from equality of educational opportunity has been assigned to economic reasons. Some human capital economists blame the educational system for the mismatch (Ferge, p. 19) between its output and those jobs which are available. They claim the school systems are offering too much academic preparation and not enough vocational preparation. The human capital critics do not criticize elitism in schools, but on the contrary, see too little of it. Academic preparation for higher education should be restricted far more than at present, according to them. In the 1980's some human capital critics express the opinion that primary education ought to be the terminal program for most. The secondary system ought mainly to be for vocational-technical trainees with relatively few in preparatory curricula for university programs. Marxists, including Carnoy (1982), and Bowles and Ginti's (1976) say that blaming the school system is a misplacement of cause. The cause of malaise according to them is not a school system which is an instrument of national policy, but an economic system which depends upon the presence of a "reserve army" of unemployed and underemployed.

The fashioning of equality of educational opportunity in the 1950's and 1960's was stimulated in the U. S. by the Brown v. Board of Education decision of the Supreme Court in 1954, where the phrase "equality of educational opportunity" was first used in a public document. Equality became an end for racial desegregation in the U. S. In other nations, concerns for nation building stimulated the equality goal. National building required common issues, language, and perception of history, as well as economic development. The term "social development" in the 1960's became a phrase which encompassed the ideals of common national language, history and values. These shared common ideals were expressed in textbooks in illustrations as well as in print. Children of various races, wearing different clothing, living in different climatic conditions and housing were pictured playing and studying together. But the activities pictured were modern activities.

The modernization of cultures was an important rationale of the goal of equality. It was of a piece with economic development. Industrialization, large scale agriculture, and the infrastructure of a modern society all required people with modern attitudes (Inkeles and Smith, 1974). Modernization becomes at once an objective and an instrument of equalization of educational and economic opportunity. Schooling, so the theory went, will go hand in hand with the making of the modern person.

The agenda of modernization by means of equalization was formed entirely in the core of the developing and developed societies. The instruments to accomplish equality were confected in ministries of education by small groups of experts: school consolidation and standardization (Hallak, 1977), national textbooks, national courses of study, plans for reorganization of ministries including decentralization, and teacher training were all put in place with little or no participation of local people or lower-level educators. Further, this trend was cross national. Plans for textbooks and

teacher training exhibited far more similarities across nations in rationale, content and activities, than the peculiarities of the countries in which they were put together, and for which they were planned. A world-wide system of education was put in place, with a common rationale and a startling number of similarities in characteristics. This was due to the shared expertise across nations fomented by international development agencies, banks, and national development instrumentalities.

Modernization as designed in the capital cities by members of the middle-class ruling cultures not surprisingly exhibited the appearances of those core cultures. The agenda of modernization was designed by those who saw their own culture as the model for the entire nation. The preparation of people of all cultures in a country for modern life in a economically developed society meant that people in outlying areas must change the cultures in order to fit into the modern society. One cannot live as a Quechua Indian in Peru or Ecuador and live as a modern person. By definition one who dresses as an Indian is one; the moment one dresses as a Nacional, one ceases being called indian. So also the language must change to that of the capitolino.

The process of modernization and development directed by the people at the top in the core or metropolis is not without its costs. The optimism, or naivete of the earlier education planners that a national culture is attainable and required for modernization and development began to wither in the 1970's.

It was part of the growing skepticism about all national instrumentalities, including educational sytems. The rationale underlying the goal of equality began to be questioned. At the same time, resistance to the definition of a national culture grew a pace in many countries; Nigeria, Spain, Belgium, Italy, Yugoslavia, Canada, Sudan, the Philippines, to name but a few, experienced the stresses of the awakened ethnic groups which felt bypassed in economic development as well as oppressed or discriminated against in national political life. This problem, referred to as a political

problem by the more naive, is far more than that, but it is at least that. Political means must be employed to solve the problems of disequality or underrepresentation of minorities in the social and economic life of a country. Equality of educational opportunity, defined as the same curriculum, aimed toward a common homogenized person in a country does not lead to unity but exacerbates disunity as well as inequality. A common curriculum imposed on all, along with artificial stereotypes of a modern, homogenized people emphasizes the unequal expectations of many people. The distance that must be traveled by the people of marginal cultures in a country on the way to modernization and economic participation is much longer, more wrenching, personally costly and demanding of many kinds of sacrifices then the educational planners of the core, who are already there, can believe or sympathize with. Add to this the impossible expectations that cultural leaps will occur within a few years, and the disorientation for the marginal peoples becomes all the more severe and the expectations of participation all the more involved.

The failure of the economies of the countries of the world to grow up to the output of the school systems was accompanied by a growing militance of marginal cultures against the agendas for nationalism and cultural hegemony of the core. The militance of the marginal people was stimulated at least in part by their realization that they were not participants in the nation's economic life; there simply was not room for all of them in a technologically sophisticated modern economy that had need for fewer jobs as new technology was put in place. The educational planners had made two mistakes, both of major proportions; they had designed a school system to prepare rural and poor people to become modern in a society that needed the skills of fewer people, and in economies which were growing far more slowly than in the 1960's when the optimistic plans were made. An equally serious blunder was the ignorance of the planners of the importance of the traditional economy.

Traditional economies include small farms, market participants, craftsmen and artisans who may not participate in a cash economy. The health of developing countries depends on traditional economies, particularly the traditional small farmer. The educational system preparing people for modern life in fact prepares people for urban participation. The energy and inflation crises of the 1970's crushed the traditional farmer and many other participants in traditional economies. Millions moved to urban areas. Only after the small farmers disappeared from their plots did many countries realize their importance as the markets which fed so many dried up for lack of food and fiber. Countries which exported food had to begin importing or at least were able to export much less. The economists had counted only plantation agriculture which was tied to export values and the international market as important. Only when the small farmer disappeared was his importance grasped by many central planners. What the economists had ignored, the education system also had ignored, and with unfortunate consequences to all.

The tensions within the various approaches to the equality goal reflect a growing realization that there are no simple planning-policy formulae for pluralistic societies which have mixed traditional-modern economies. The attempts to dictate centrally-determined models or concepts of equality, with no recognition of pluralism, brings conflict and economic ruin.

Integration

The goal of integration is closely related to equality. It can be seen as a way of accomplishing equality, but it is not completely congruent. Integration is a goal which aims to bring into the political, social and economic life of the country those who are not fully participating in those sectors of society.

The education policy goal of integration uses the school systems of a nation as an instrument to bring about the participation of marginal groups in the society. The schools as instruments of national policy help these groups reach for equality of economic and political opportunity. An example of the use of schooling as an agent of integration of all citizens into economic life is Yugoslavian principle of solidarity and reciprocity in education which aims toward equality of all who are in work and at school, instead of using school as an instrument of preparing people for unequal positions (Yugoslavia, OECD, 1981).

Examples of the use of schools as agents of social integration are Uganda and Israel which used nursery schools to achieve social mixing (UNESCO, IBE, pp. 14-15), Nigeria's efforts to use schools to bridge the religious and ethnic diversity in that country (Bray and Coper, 1979), and the court-ordered desegregation processes in the United States which have employed school mapping, transportation of students and consolidation of units to accomplish mixing of Black and White units.

The purpose of such attempts is to bring about national units which transcend localities' interests and the value systems of constituent cultures in the societies.[1] The concern for integration whether social or economic is to preserve the nation against separation. Many nations have gone through violent upheavals in which certain cultures, regions or ethnic groups attempted to establish their own separate identity. The preservation of nationhood is such a powerful motivation that the society which uses processes which do violence to values or cultures in the name of unity see a higher good in the cultural sacrifices which the minorities make.

Socialization into the community or culture is controlled by family, or community member. The end of the process is known to the family members and is protective of the family or extended family. Far from this close family - community

relationship is the socialization which the society imposes over the socialization to community. The neighborhood school in the U. S., according to Waller ( ) was an extension of the socialization process into community. The Brown decision of 1954 in the U. S. was the beginning of the end of that comfortable arrangement. By the end of the 1960's the school had been fashioned by state and federal authorities into an instrument for socialization to a national social agenda. Society had replaced community in the school. The child was being socialized into a mobile, multi-racial society, community values were brushed aside in court orders outlawing prayer in school, and establishing students' rights to many previously adult civil rights, including the right to read virtually any material and the right to have abortions without parental consent.

The U. S. examples are much different than those of LDC's or other developed countries, but similar in that the culture of the core became the official culture in all countries. Its superiority was established in curriculum standards, texts, the official language, which was the "key" which students of the core had to decipher the symbols and concepts of the culture-laden curriculum (Bourdieu, 1973).

Education systems replete with official cultures do not recognize non-formal education systems in indigenous cultures (Ahuja, 1949). Indigenous cultures are examples of marginal, unintegrated cultures which are subordinate to the core culture in education systems. LaBelle ( ) explains well the political processes by which countries transform the core culture into a controlling culture. Core cultures impose their image of "national" culture, which becomes society's agenda, on subordinate cultures.

The goal of integration into economic or social life has been studied by international agencies. The term "Regionalism" has been applied to the instrumentality used by many nations to attempt some kind of integration for marginal

groups which live away from the core and which include indigerous groups culturally different from the core group.

The concept of Regionalism has been used by OECD and UNESCO to examine problems of economic inequality. The approach of regional development in TVA in the United States existed as a model to bring into participation in the economic life of a nation a backward area. In the late 1970's the concept of regionalism was used to combine the study of areas which were economically underdeveloped, were marginal or remote from the core, were culturally different from a nation's core, and had inadequate services including education, transportation and health. The region was seen as a more appropriate unit of planning in some studies then the country as a whole. Inequalities clustered together for many interactive reasons (OECD, 1979). Improving conditions of populations of regions require coming to terms with cultural realities as well as economic and political phenomena. Education in marginal regions has been planned by and put in place by the core, as mentioned above, which neither recognizes the special characteristics and requirements of the marginal peoples, nor prepares them either for their more traditional economies or the modern economies of the core. If and when marginal people from the core enter the modern economy they do so at the very lowest level and are treated as surplus lab, easily dispensed with as technology is put in place, or are laid off in tough economic periods.

Regionalism as an approach to integration recognizes the difficulties of attempted homogenization by peoples. Further, it recognizes the difficulties inherent in attempting definition of equality or policies fashioned to attempt them. Regionalism recognizes inequality and cultural segregation, at least as temporary conditions on the way to nationhood. It may become a concept which allows pluralism as a national policy.

Centralized national educational systems which require one curriculum, content defined by the officials of the core culture, and tests constructed by the same officials guarantee inequality of effects. Marginal or indigenous people may have equality of access to the lowest level of educational systems but cannot cope with the sorting system which is designed by people who define the marginals as outside the national culture. One national educational system is inherently unequal in its effects for peoples of marginal regions.

Decentralization

The goal of decentralization has been attempted for two reasons; one was to secure greater participation. Another was to get rid of certain functions from the central office of the education authority to free it of trivial demands by the parents and professionals of the system. The decentralization was designed to distribute responsibility to lower level offices so that the central authority did not become too large and cluttered.

There was an occasional attempt,as in Italy (Pridham, 1979) and Peru to create local decision-making units with something like boards of education having some responsibility for the school facilities of the locality. The efforts to distribute decision-making resulted in handing over the local power to local elites, and professionals rather than to lay people.

Decentralization accomplishes participation provided that a number of conditions are met. These include:

a. The willingness to allow local representativesto negotiate with central authoritic over resources for education and for locally-determined educational obejctives at least for part of the curriculum.
b. The training of administrators to be actively involved in local educational policy.
c. Delegation of some degree of power to local units. Without this delegation, no participation is possible.
d. Recognition by the central authority of the necessity to allow differences in educational program among local units.

These conditions while necessary to accomplish participation, are difficult to achieve. They are most difficult to achieve because they demand a recognition of inequality between units. Certain units bargain more effectively than others. Power is never distributed equally among local units.

The response of central authority to growing local inequality is to insist on societal norms across all units, to preserve national values and unity. The central authority also tries to promote economic growth which recognizes inequality between local units. Economic development favors certain localities, but requires social mobility. People must be allowed to move from traditional areas to modern areas in order to provide the surplus labor which economic developes core, thus presumably serving the goal of equality.

The tension between participation and central authority most often is settled in favor of central authority. Local units are distrusted by central authority precisely because local authority wants the right to be unequal, to exceed norms for resources and to break bureaucratic rules so essential to central authority's sense of well-being. But inequality is desired by local units, for different reasons than central authority allows its local units want the right to exercise different values and to see them reflected in the local schools than the central authority which represents society. Society's values are a homogenization of values, while localities desire to hold and express values and practices peculiar to them, including the right to local language, religious rites, and parental rights over children. Communities also cling to inequalities within their culture. These inequalities within the community are correlated to social rank, and correspond often to culturally - determined place in the community. This inequality is a feature of any economic system, but traditional economies have developed cultural "rationales" for these inequalities which makes them seem even more socially "correct" to their participants than is so in modern "rational" economies.

Central authorities put in place school systems which are uncorrelated with and which do not recognize traditional cultures or economies. Inequalities within traditional communities do not become so disruptive of national hegemony as inequalities between communities or regions. These inequalities don't become disruptive, however, until community leaders in backward regions begin to organize and negotiate for their share of economic development. The imposition of a national curriculum in a school system representing homogenized national values does not have the potential for stirring inter-regional competition or inter-community competition quite as much as a system in which communities and regions learn bargaining in a national system through participation at a local level. This is the danger which central authorities see and would like to avoid.

The administrators to run a locally controlled system are lacking in many countries. Lacking training or experience in a country in which communities are to negotiate with the central authority, an administrator simply would have to let the locals move up the line of authority to upper levels where people can get answers, usually in the negative. Administrators have to learn to deal with local leadership and in so doing must know when to encourage local initiatives.

The second reason for decentralization is by far the most common one. That is to get the lower management functions of the educational system out of the ministry. In growing systems in all countries in the 1960's centralized authorities had to establish regional offices to which were delegated certain functions in order to de-clutter the central ministry of petitioners.

This de-cluttering accomplished another objective. To the degree that people who wished to question or test central authority policy had to do so at lower levels, it kept them away from the view of and knowledge about the levers of influence and power in the system. The lower the level the central system accommodated

complainers and bargainers, the more it might seem to the dissatisfied lay people and lower level professionals that remedies actually lay close to them rather than in the capital. And that function of absorption of disatisfaction alone was worth all the resources the core had spent in decentralization.

Decentralization without redistribution of power or participation was and is common in educational systems. It makes most psychic demands of lower level administrators who know they are nearly powerless, but who must listen to complaints and petitions. Those administrators who are at lower levels know the communities and cultures best and know how unequal the system treats so many. They administer unequality and must justify it to the people who seek remedy or justice. Meanwhile the policymakers and planers at the core are insulated from those who can explain the details of failed plans and policies. So decentralization at its worst can prevent negative feedback from changing the educational system. Only a major social upheaval could get through to the central authority in such an ossified and "rational" system which is in crisis.

Equality, as I said at the beginning, has been abandoned as a goal in many countries. The retreat from quality is conscious, and few countries are making excuses for it, nor are they claiming that the goal is simply a little more distant than it once seemed. The heady days of the 1960's when education was seen as an instrument to achieve equality seem remote.

Even the promise of eventual equality of educational access has been abandoned in many countries as a unrealistic goal. It costs too much; the returns from education diminish as the average amount of education received in a country increases; economic development doesn't require mass secondary education so much as targeting some people for special kinds of training; having lots of over-educated people idle is

dangerous, go some arguments. These arguments are really scarcity arguments. Either the resources aren't available, or they are better spent on the expansion of the economy and the infrastructure directly rather than on education; the benefits are then more immediate and obvious, go these arguments.

More discouraging are the organizational arguments against equality. A centralized education system can't accommodate equality of access, integration, and decentralization for participation because the goals are incompatible. Further, they are collectively incompatible with a homogeneous system of national values. Equality is damaged by decentralization - participation. Equality cannot be accomplished through integration. Integration and decentralization participation are hostile to each other. Equality, integration and participation threaten a central system, unless they are aimed at such a low level of goal attainment as not to drive a system toward any new targets, but simply are held at low levels.

Equality of access as a goal in education does not now appear to many countries' education policymakers to lead to national economic development. The goals of economic development and equality of educational access are related but we no longer claim to know how. This lack of knowledge about the relationship between two apparently related phenomena must be remedied by attempts to construct and test new models, both macro and micro in developing countries.

Finally, new definitions of equality in education must be designed. Those in developed countries are being questioned as inappropriate or inapplicable in developing countries. Perhaps we will see a trend away from the imposition of a single educational system with identical curriculum and content as the operational definition of equality in education.

Educational administration in a world of economic and social crisis is an instrument of stability rather than of change. Educators who have imagined administrators to be agents of change have seen those administrators install a technical system in developing countries which is in many respects inappropriate. From now on the administrators will have to look at effects of their system on people rather than to follow the impulse to preserve the technical system. The greatest challenge to administration is to build systems which are just and efficient. The problem of equality is a world problem. Administrators also must now attempt to obtain transfer of technology and capitol from the developed to those countries which want equality.

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Footnote

[1] In Greece, an avowed purpose of a new policy for technical education which was to be integrated at a parity of esteem and opportunity into the national system of secondary education was to eliminate a cause of social friction (OECD, 1980).